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Subject: EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines - Friday, March 29, 2019

EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines

Friday, March 29, 2019

*** DAILY HOT LIST ***

U.S. Senate Committee, EPA Urgency Of PFAS Contamination Response

BUCKS COUNTY COURIER-TIMES During a Senate Environment and Public Works committee Thursday, U.S. Sen. Tom Carper, of Delaware, and an EPA official went back and forth on the speed of the agency's response to PFAS chemicals. Department of Defense and Environmental Protection Agency officials faced scrutiny over their response to toxic chemicals during a Senate hearing Thursday morning, but repeated past assurances that their agencies were doing all they could to address growing contamination. The subject of the two-hour Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing was per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, a family of durable chemicals that have been used for decades in non-stick cookware, water-resistant clothing, firefighting foams used by the military, and other applications. Bucks and Montgomery counties are the site of one of the worst PFAS contaminations in the country, with at least 70,000 people previously exposed to dangerous amounts of the chemicals. Citizens, towns and environmental groups nationwide have been critical of the military and EPA over the response to PFAS, saying they've been too slow to respond to a growing national health crisis. Committee minority leader Sen. Tom Carper, D-Delaware, voiced such concerns Thursday, saying the EPA lacked a sense of urgency. "I know it when I see it," Carper said. "That's not the case, at least so far." David Ross, assistant administrator in the EPA's Office of Water, referred to the agency's PFAS Action Plan, reiterating previous congressional testimony that the EPA has committed to considering a nationwide drinking water standard, listing some PFAS as hazardous substances under the Superfund law, creating groundwater recommendations, and other measures. When Carper tried to pin Ross down on a precise date for setting a drinking water standard, Ross said the process didn't allow for such a prediction. "We are going to move as expeditiously as we can," Ross said. Asked by Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Maryland, about how the EPA will support water suppliers and treatment operators hit by PFAS contamination costs, Ross referred to the agency's consideration of a Superfund listing. "If we list (PFAS) as hazardous substances ... that helps in the cost recovery aspect," Ross said...

Remember the Thanksgiving chemical leak that shut the Delaware Memorial Bridges? State fines the firm \$246,500

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER British chemical maker Croda has agreed to pay the state of Delaware a \$230,000 penalty and \$16,500 for costs from the Thanksgiving Sunday chemical leak that shut the twin Delaware Memorial Bridges on Nov. 25 for seven hours. Croda must complete an air and water testing report and may have to do additional renovation and monitoring work before the unit can reopen, according to the agreement, signed by Delaware's top environmental official, Shawn Garvin, and Croda's top U.S. lawyer, Christina Manuelli. Investigators from the state Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and the state Justice Department are concerned that 700,000 gallons of water sprayed on 2,688 gallons of leaked, explosive and toxic ethylene oxide may have contaminated area groundwater along with the toxic solvent 1,4 dioxane, a cancer-causing byproduct of Croda's process at the unit. The accident at Croda's Atlas Point chemical complex near New Castle, Del., has idled the newly built ethylene life unit at the plant for four months. Croda was penalized, in part, for operating the plant for three weeks in October before

receiving a proper inspection, which the state later approved. The unit was built with state incentives to encourage industries to invest in Delaware's aging chemical industries. The accident underlined the project's proximity to the bridge and nearby homes, which have grown up since the plant was developed for chemical manufacturing in the 1930s. A Croda spokeswoman had no additional comment beyond the agreement...

White House Finalizes 1.9 Percent Pay Raise for Civilian Feds

GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE President Trump on Thursday signed an executive order authorizing a 1.9 percent pay increase for federal employees this year, retroactive to January, ending six weeks of waiting and speculation about when the measure would be implemented. On Feb. 15, Trump enacted a spending package to keep the government open through September that included a 1.4 percent across-the-board pay increase for civilian federal workers and an average 0.5 percent increase in their locality pay for this year. The provision was retroactive to the first pay period of the year, which began Jan. 6. But since then, it had been unclear when the measure would be implemented. Last week, acting Office of Personnel Management Director Margaret Weichert told reporters that the process was very "legalistic" but that the pay raise was in the "final clearance" stages. Pay tables on OPM's website had not yet been updated as of mid-Thursday afternoon and the agency did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Depending on how quickly federal payroll processors are able to switch over to the new pay tables, federal employees could see the raise reflected in their paychecks as early as next week. But it is unclear when they will receive lump sum payments to cover what they are owed as part of the retroactive portion of the pay increase. The raise overrode a pay freeze that Trump had authorized last December. Trump has proposed another pay freeze for federal civilian employees in 2020, although he proposed a 3.1 percent pay raise for members of the military in his fiscal 2020 budget request.

Northam's push to overhaul DEQ moving forward

ROANOKE TIMES LEXINGTON — Plans to overhaul the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, launched one year ago, are starting to take shape. A report with recommendations will be released next month pursuant to an executive order from Gov. Ralph Northam, who directed DEQ staff, in consultation with the secretary of natural resources, to review the agency's permitting, monitoring and enforcement activities. What administration officials call a "revitalization" comes as Virginia deals with the construction of two massive natural gas pipelines, the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay, efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other natural resource issues. Speaking Wednesday at Virginia Military Institute, Northam also acknowledged that the intersection of racial and environmental issues has been shaped by the recent controversy over his appearance in blackface years ago and his subsequent efforts to mend relations with minorities. "We're refocused, there's no question," he told reporters after his speech to the Environment Virginia Symposium. A key part of Northam's executive order — which he unveiled a year ago at the same gathering — seeks to improve the way DEQ communicates with the public. An outcry over plans to build a compressor station for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline in a predominantly black community in Buckingham County was cited as one example of the need for enhanced outreach. The environment "is our birthright as Virginians and Americans, and it belongs to all of us, no matter the color of our skin or the size of our pocketbooks," Northam told attendees of the 30th annual symposium. In remarks preceding the governor's address, Secretary of Natural Resources Matt Strickler said administration officials are looking forward to working with the Virginia Advisory Council on Environmental Justice. Last August, a former version of the council created by former Gov. Terry McAuliffe recommended that work be suspended on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and a similar natural gas project under construction in Southwest Virginia, the Mountain Valley Pipeline...

Chesapeake Bay water quality reaches all-time high since 1985

SOUTHERN MARYLAND NEWS The water quality of the Chesapeake Bay was reported to be the cleanest since testing began in 1985, reaching a record high of 42 percent of bay water meeting clean water standards between 2015 and 2017, the Chesapeake Bay Program announced this week. The regional partnership attributed the improvements largely to reductions in algae growth and increases in underwater grass abundance and dissolved oxygen in the open waters of the bay. As a key indicator of the bay's health, the bay's water quality has been monitored since 1985. New research published by the bay program described the trends seen in the water quality of the bay "positive and statistically significant," according to a release from the organization. The bay program said the findings show that the bay is resilient, and recovery efforts invested by various partners to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution are

working. While there's cause to celebrate, bay experts also noted the reality that 58 percent of tidal waters are still considered impaired and the impact of last year's record rainfall remains to be seen. Heavy rain not only leads to high river flows and heavy flooding, as it did last year, it also washes a large amount of fresh water into the bay, bringing more sediments and nutrients into bay waters. "I'm pretty confident to say that 2018 will not be a continuation of that positive trend," Jeremy Testa, assistant professor at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's Chesapeake Biological Laboratory in Solomons, said by phone Wednesday. In local waterways like the Patuxent River, Testa said there have already been indicators that may suggest water quality declined last year. Underwater grass, for example, was not as robust as it was in 2017. "In 2017, a lot of sea grass emerged in areas we had not seen," he said. "Some of those beds did not come back" last year. Testa said the likely culprit could be higher nutrient concentration in the water, which is tied to high precipitation that generally washes more nutrients into the bay. Despite the likely bad news, Testa said the year 2018 may be the first test on the resiliency of the bay after years of restoration efforts.

Softer tone emerges in meetings between community, military over munitions plant pollution

VIRGINIA MERCURY CHRISTIANSBURG — Lt. Col. James Scott's first community meeting as commander of the Radford Army Ammunition Plant two years ago began as a standoff. Armed police officers stood watch around the perimeter of the room. Community members sat in chairs on one side. Army officials and staffers from BAE Systems, the private contractor that operates the plant — regularly listed as Virginia's biggest polluter and the scene of a deadly fire last year — sat behind tables on the other side. The meeting began with a recitation of the stern rules governing the gathering. Scott's final community meeting, on a March weeknight at the Christiansburg public library nearly two years later, went much more smoothly. "You can see what we've grown here," Scott told a group of about 25 citizens. "No longer the armed police officers in the back of the room. No longer (us) sitting behind the tables." "No more reading the rules," added BAE Systems spokesman Chris Finley. "The community has chosen, and those that are here have chosen, to want to solve problems," Scott said. "Instead of just throwing the proverbial chair, they want to be a part of the solution. We don't all have to agree. We just have to work together to find a better positive ground for our community, ourselves." So what happened to smooth out relations between officials from the facility and its neighbors in the New River Valley? A simple willingness to listen and share concerns, they say. Also, \$150 million-plus in recent and planned investments by the Department of Defense to build new facilities that will cut 95 percent of the plant's emissions by 2023...

New Campaign Calls For Long-Term Solutions To Clairton Coke (Coal) Works' Pollution

PITTSBURGH CITY PAPER U.S. Steel's Clairton Coke Works has been a source of intense air and water pollution in the Mon Valley for decades. Now, advocacy group PennFuture is looking to force U.S. Steel to make some long-term changes with a new campaign. Over the past year, the company has been met with a series of enforcement orders and fines. The company was hit with a \$1 million fine and an order to redesign the Coke Works facility by the Allegheny County Health Department. U.S. Steel is appealing the fine and the order. Annually, the works produces more than 4 million tons of coke, a byproduct of coal-mining production that is used to fuel steel facilities. In a statement, PennFuture president Jacquelyn Bonomo expressed frustration with U.S. Steel's attempts to divert enforcement of fines and regulations, and their investments in places other than the Mon Valley. She says there is a lack of effort on U.S. Steel's part to improve the safety of Clairton Coke Works, noting that it recently invested \$750 million in their flagship facility in Gary, Ind. "The Mon Valley needs the kind of investments that U.S. Steel is making elsewhere. Residents of this region deserve clean air, and good jobs," she said. "By increasing its investments here, committing to modernizing with advanced technology, and obeying the laws, U.S. Steel can help the region have clean air and good jobs for the future." The organization announced the #ToxicNeighbor campaign on March 26, which encourages citizen engagement and mobilization in seeking to force U.S. Steel to invest in long-term solutions for the coke works. "Clairton Coke Works' long history of toxic pollution — caused by a combination of the sheer age of the Works and its multiple failing components — can no longer be addressed through bite-sized fixes," the organization writes in a petition. "It is time for U.S. Steel to invest in the facility — at levels sufficient to eliminate or significantly reduce problems, pollution, and emergencies."...

Enforcement: EPA, DOJ officials defend Trump's record

GREENWIRE DENVER — Career officials at EPA and the Justice Department went on the defensive today in a debate about the Trump administration's enforcement record. DOJ environment lawyer Bruce Gelber said the idea that "environmental scofflaws are out there in the street dancing with joy" due to lax enforcement is "largely bunk." Gelber is a high-ranking career official in the Environment and Natural Resources Division and has been with the team since 1985. He made the remarks during a panel discussion on compliance and enforcement at the American Bar Association's environmental law conference here. He debated the administration's record with Hudson Riverkeeper President Paul Gallay, who argued that the government's current level of enforcement is "aberrant" compared with levels during the George W. Bush administration... Suzanne Bohan, acting regional administrator for enforcement in EPA Region 8 in Denver, highlighted the agency's efforts to use all available tools to improve compliance with environmental standards. Those include inspections, she said, but "inspection numbers don't tell the whole story." EPA also makes frequent information requests from regulated industries, tries to assist with compliance efforts, and uses other "carrots and sticks" to enforce the laws and regulations, said Bohan, who has been at EPA since 1990. She also acknowledged that her enforcement team is stretched thin but is focused on compliance initiatives that prioritize lead exposure, chemical accidents, areas that aren't in attainment with the Clean Air Act and other big issues. With "a president who says he wants to eliminate EPA in almost every form," Gallay said, "I've got to call b.s." "He's a president who says a lot," Gelber replied.

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Remember the Thanksgiving chemical leak that shut the Delaware Memorial Bridges? State fines the firm \$246,500
British chemical maker Croda has agreed to pay the state of Delaware a \$230,000 penalty and \$16,500 for costs from the Thanksgiving Sunday chemical leak that shut the twin Delaware Memorial Bridges on Nov. 25 for seven hours. Croda must complete an air and water testing report and may have to do additional renovation and monitoring work before the unit can reopen, according to the agreement, signed by Delaware's top environmental official, Shawn Garvin, and Croda's top U.S lawyer, Christina Manuelli. Investigators from the state Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and the state Justice Department are concerned that 700,000 gallons of water sprayed on 2,688 gallons of leaked, explosive and toxic ethylene oxide may have contaminated area groundwater along with the toxic solvent 1,4 dioxane, a cancer-causing byproduct of Croda's process at the unit. The accident at Croda's Atlas Point chemical complex near New Castle, Del., has idled the newly built ethylene life unit at the plant for four months. Croda was penalized, in part, for operating the plant for three weeks in October before receiving a proper inspection, which the state later approved. The unit was built with state incentives to encourage industries to invest in Delaware's aging chemical industries. The accident underlined the project's proximity to the bridge and nearby homes, which have grown up since the plant was developed for chemical manufacturing in the 1930s. A Croda spokeswoman had no additional comment beyond the agreement...

Traffic enforcement made SEPTA bus service faster, but can the city sustain it? Buses that serve tens of thousands of riders a day in Philadelphia ran faster thanks to a four-month traffic enforcement surge that began last fall. "It's a test of our ability," Mike Carroll, deputy managing director for the city's transportation office and a SEPTA board member, said after the transit agency's monthly board meeting. "We know the scope of improvement that's possible." Improving bus service is of keen interest to city officials and SEPTA. The transit agency has reported declining bus ridership four years straight, and in 2018 had 155 million bus trips, the lowest count in at least 17 years, according to recently released federal data. Buses are chronically late and in some parts of Philadelphia, are slower than a person on foot. This spring, SEPTA anticipates soliciting proposals to re-imagine bus service, but the work will likely take two to three years...

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

CDC, state officials investigating multiple cases of rare cancer in southwestern Pa.

any in the Canon-McMillan School District first learned about Ewing sarcoma, a rare childhood bone cancer, when Luke Blanock of the village of Cecil was diagnosed on Dec. 5, 2014. The media did stories about the community rallying around the smart, handsome teenager and his family, then returned on Feb. 19, 2016, to cover Mr. Blanock — pale, thin and having just been told he had only two weeks to live — when he married his high school girlfriend, Natalie Britvich. He rebounded a bit and even played a round of golf before succumbing nearly six months later on Aug. 7, from multiple tumors of the brain, spine, skull, jaw and pelvis. He was only 19. But, as it turns out, the Ewing sarcoma scare within Canon-McMillan's boundaries in eastern Washington County neither began nor ended with Luke Blanock. In fact, six cases of Ewing sarcoma have been diagnosed within the school district since 2008, including two cases in the past nine months. And only now is it being disclosed that twice that number of Ewing cases have occurred in southeastern Westmoreland County since 2011. Only 200 to 250 cases of Ewing sarcoma — a rare cancer of the bone or nearby soft tissue — occur each year in the United States. The National Cancer Institute said the incidence for all ages is one case per million but up to 10 cases per million among those in the 10-to-19 age group. Based on a report by a concerned resident and St. Vincent College researchers about the Ewing cases in Westmoreland County, the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention launched a study to determine whether these cases constitute a cluster. The state now has expanded the investigation to include the Canon-McMillan School District and Washington County. Nate Wardle, health department spokesman, said it received more than a dozen phone calls within the last month from residents of Washington and Westmoreland counties about the Ewing sarcoma cases, and several more called this week...

Alabama company continues buying spree, picking up shale wells in Washington County Diversified Gas & Oil, the owner of about 24,000 natural gas wells in Pennsylvania, is continuing its buying spree, as promised. This time, the Alabama-based firm is spending some \$400 million to buy 56 wells in Washington County and 51 wells in West Virginia. These are all horizontal, Marcellus Shale wells that Noble Energy Inc. unloaded to West Virginia-based HG Energy Appalachia II two years ago for \$1.2 billion. That deal also included midstream infrastructure. Over the past few years, Diversified has emerged as the largest owner of oil and gas wells in Appalachia, with about 60,000 total. Most are older, shallow and conventional wells...

Letter: Senate should have a real impact on climate

Perhaps now that the Senate has rejected the Green New Deal (March 26, "The Senate Shuns the Green New Deal Amid Claims of Bad Faith"), our representatives can start to seriously consider an alternative proposal capable of having a real impact on our climate. The Energy Innovation and Climate Dividend Act (HR 763), re-introduced in the House in January, proposes a carbon fee that would be returned to all ratepayers in the form of a monthly dividend. Most families would benefit financially from this measure and, even more important, it would drive economic innovation while motivating significant reductions in the emission of climate-warming pollutants. Even better, it's a bipartisan proposal, with both Republican and Democratic co-sponsors. Congressman Mike Doyle should support this bill in the House and Sens. Pat Toomey and Bob Casey should work for its introduction in the Senate. Green or not, it's a new deal that we need as soon as possible to start curbing emissions and triggering economic revitalization that will surely smooth out paths of opportunity and realize some of the most important goals of the Green New Deal...

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

Rare Cancers Prompt PA Health Department Reviews The rare Ewing sarcoma cancers that struck 12 children and young adults in southeastern Westmoreland County between 2011 and early 2018 did not reach the threshold to be considered a statistically significant cancer cluster, a state health department spokesman said Thursday. "We looked at all the cases and determined there was not a statistically significant cancer cluster," Health Department spokesman Nate Wardle said. He said the department completed its review of the Westmoreland County Ewing Sarcoma Project in May 2018 but continues to investigate reports of six cases of Ewing sarcoma in and around the Canon-McMillan School District in Washington County over the past 10 years. Ewing sarcoma is a cancer that attacks the bones and soft tissue surrounding the bones of children and young adults. The incidence of the relatively rare cancer that has no known risk

factors — about 200 to 250 new cases are diagnosed each year in the United States — continues to raise questions with families facing the daunting diagnosis. Those questions prompted Maureen Grace, a Westmoreland County teacher and lawyer, to join Saint Vincent College professor of anthropology and public health Elaine Bennett and Cynthia Walter, a retired professor of ecology and toxicology, to document the statistics in the Westmoreland County project. Wardle said public concern in Washington County, specifically in the Canon-McMillan School District, prompted the department to launch an investigation into all cancers there with a focus on radiation-induced cancers and the Ewing's family of sarcomas. "We have received calls from concerned members of the community, who were worried about the cancer risks to children in the area and possible environmental risk factors. Some of those who contacted us mentioned historic radiation sources in the area, and this prompted us to analyze the radiation-related cancers, in addition to the Ewing's family and childhood cancer in general," Wardle said of the ongoing study in Washington County. He said the department expects to release the results of that study next month.

PITTSBURGH CITY PAPER

New Campaign Calls For Long-Term Solutions To Clairton Coke (Coal) Works' Pollution U.S. Steel's Clairton Coke Works has been a source of intense air and water pollution in the Mon Valley for decades. Now, advocacy group PennFuture is looking to force U.S. Steel to make some long-term changes with a new campaign. Over the past year, the company has been met with a series of enforcement orders and fines. The company was hit with a \$1 million fine and an order to redesign the Coke Works facility by the Allegheny County Health Department. U.S. Steel is appealing the fine and the order. Annually, the works produces more than 4 million tons of coke, a byproduct of coal-mining production that is used to fuel steel facilities. In a statement, PennFuture president Jacquelyn Bonomo expressed frustration with U.S. Steel's attempts to divert enforcement of fines and regulations, and their investments in places other than the Mon Valley. She says there is a lack of effort on U.S. Steel's part to improve the safety of Clairton Coke Works, noting that it recently invested \$750 million in their flagship facility in Gary, Ind. "The Mon Valley needs the kind of investments that U.S. Steel is making elsewhere. Residents of this region deserve clean air, and good jobs," she said. "By increasing its investments here, committing to modernizing with advanced technology, and obeying the laws, U.S. Steel can help the region have clean air and good jobs for the future." The organization announced the #ToxicNeighbor campaign on March 26, which encourages citizen engagement and mobilization in seeking to force U.S. Steel to invest in long-term solutions for the coke works. "Clairton Coke Works' long history of toxic pollution — caused by a combination of the sheer age of the Works and its multiple failing components — can no longer be addressed through bite-sized fixes," the organization writes in a petition. "It is time for U.S. Steel to invest in the facility — at levels sufficient to eliminate or significantly reduce problems, pollution, and emergencies."...

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA (NPR)

'I am the witness': Post-Fukushima, a Japanese man's regrets mirror his country's turn against nuclear power The partial meltdown at Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in central Pennsylvania 40 years ago in March did not lead to large releases of radiation, but it helped turn public opinion away from nuclear energy. In Japan, an even more catastrophic nuclear disaster occurred eight years ago this month. And like many Pennsylvanians, the Japanese have largely turned against nuclear. The earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown is known in Japan as simply "March 11." And everyone knows where they were on March 11, 2011. Yuji Onuma was in the town of Futaba, where he grew up and was living with his wife, who was pregnant with their first child. Their home was about 3 or 4 kilometers from the Daiichi nuclear power plant. But right now, he's living away from the coast in another prefecture, and he says he wants to settle in a town that is about as far away from any of Japan's 54 nuclear power plants as he can possibly be. During an interview, Onuma showed a picture of when he was about 12 years old and getting an award from the Mayor of Futaba. A teacher had asked the kids to come up with a town slogan. In a place where everyone depended on the nearby nuclear plant for work, Onuma's entry won: "Atomic power: energy for a bright future" became the slogan on an archway over Futaba's main street. "I was very proud because this is my first ever award by the town," Onuma said through a translator. "And all the town people praised me and said, you are very great. So I was so proud of that." Then he showed another photo. It's only a few months after the accident, and no one is left living in Futaba. This time, he's wearing a protective Tyvek suit and mask, he's standing below the sign holding up a placard that changes his slogan to: "Atomic power: energy for a destructive future." "I made the wrong slogan," Onuma said. "If we didn't have this accident I would have still believed that atomic energy has a bright future. But I'm glad that I realized my mistake before I died."...

'I remember TMI': An oral history of the 1979 Three Mile Island accident as told by people who lived nearby Pretty much

everyone who lived near Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in 1979 has a story about what happened there that spring. It turned out to be the nation's worst commercial nuclear accident. In this special StateImpact Pennsylvania oral history, listen as seven residents bring you inside their stories of uncertainty, confusion, fear and the decision they faced: Stay home amid risk of radiation, or flee.

PENNSYLVANIA CAPITAL-STAR

Senators decry Trump White House's 'lack of urgency' on PFAS contamination WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has failed to act swiftly enough to protect the public from harmful contaminants present in drinking water throughout the country, U.S. senators told senior administration officials Thursday. Democrats and Republicans alike expressed frustration over the federal government's response to the widespread drinking water contamination by chemicals known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, at a Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on the issue. The man-made chemicals — used in everything from fire-fighting foam to clothing and nonstick pans — are found on military bases, including one in Montgomery County, Pa., and in other U.S. communities. They have been linked to cancer and other serious health problems, and environmental and public health advocates want faster cleanup and strict guidelines for the allowable limits of the chemicals in drinking water. “Far too many communities worry about the quality of their drinking water in this country,” Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., said at the hearing, where officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Defense testified about the federal response to the health risks associated with the chemicals. The two federal agencies, Duckworth said, have “failed to understand the scope of the PFAS problem, and they’ve failed to determine how to dispose of the chemical — which persists in the environment and our bodies — and regulate the chemical.” The Trump EPA announced an “action plan” in February to address the health problems, but critics say it isn’t aggressive enough, and the administration won’t commit to a timeline for regulation. David Ross, the EPA’s top water official, said the agency is committed to “proposing a regulatory determination this year” and would “move through that process as expeditiously as possible.” ...

BUCKS COUNTY COURIER TIMES

U.S. Senate Committee, EPA Urgency Of PFAS Contamination Response During a Senate Environment and Public Works committee Thursday, U.S. Sen. Tom Carper, of Delaware, and an EPA official went back and forth on the speed of the agency's response to PFAS chemicals. Department of Defense and Environmental Protection Agency officials faced scrutiny over their response to toxic chemicals during a Senate hearing Thursday morning, but repeated past assurances that their agencies were doing all they could to address growing contamination. The subject of the two-hour Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing was per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, a family of durable chemicals that have been used for decades in non-stick cookware, water-resistant clothing, firefighting foams used by the military, and other applications. Bucks and Montgomery counties are the site of one of the worst PFAS contaminations in the country, with at least 70,000 people previously exposed to dangerous amounts of the chemicals. Citizens, towns and environmental groups nationwide have been critical of the military and EPA over the response to PFAS, saying they've been too slow to respond to a growing national health crisis. Committee minority leader Sen. Tom Carper, D-Delaware, voiced such concerns Thursday, saying the EPA lacked a sense of urgency. “I know it when I see it,” Carper said. “That’s not the case, at least so far.” David Ross, assistant administrator in the EPA’s Office of Water, referred to the agency’s PFAS Action Plan, reiterating previous congressional testimony that the EPA has committed to considering a nationwide drinking water standard, listing some PFAS as hazardous substances under the Superfund law, creating groundwater recommendations, and other measures. When Carper tried to pin Ross down on a precise date for setting a drinking water standard, Ross said the process didn’t allow for such a prediction. “We are going to move as expeditiously as we can,” Ross said. Asked by Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Maryland, about how the EPA will support water suppliers and treatment operators hit by PFAS contamination costs, Ross referred to the agency’s consideration of a Superfund listing. “If we list (PFAS) as hazardous substances ... that helps in the cost recovery aspect,” Ross said...

ERIE TIMES NEWS

Join Presque Isle Litter Cleanup On Sunday In Erie Join Presque Isle State Park naturalists on Sunday for a litter clean-up at the park's Gull Point natural area. Meet at 1 p.m. at the Gull Point trailhead at the Beach 10 parking lot to pick up debris along the shoreline until 4 p.m. The natural area of Gull Point is closed to the public from April 1 until Nov. 30 and so is not included in Presque Isle's annual spring clean-up and fall International Coastal Clean-up...

LANCASTER NEWSPAPERS

Here's what caused Thursday's pink plume at Lancaster County's waste-to-energy plant Usually, water vapor rising from the waste-to-energy facility stacks in Conoy Township appears white. But around lunchtime Thursday, the vapor had a pinkish hue. It's a rare – but harmless – event that happens when trash containing iodine is burned, according to Kathryn Sandoe, spokeswoman for the Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority. Such as the iodine you put on a cut? Exactly that, Sandoe said. She likened what people saw to someone adding a drop of food coloring to water. "Iodine is a really dense, dark purple and when you combust it, the water vapor is then tinged," she said. Sandoe stressed there was no danger to the public or environment from the vapor plume, which had dissipated by mid-afternoon. "It just can be alarming to folks because it's not normally what you see," she said. The last time she could recall another pink-tinged plume was in 2014.

Editorial: The past and future fears about Three Mile Island Forty years ago today, in the quiet hour between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m., a combination of equipment failure and human error ignited one of the biggest scares in Pennsylvania history. At Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station in Dauphin County, Unit 2 suffered a partial meltdown of the reactor core, just three months after it had been commissioned. "When word got out, thousands of Lancaster County residents fled the area, and the fears of those first few days are still burned into the collective consciousness of a generation," Ad Crable wrote in last weekend's Sunday LNP. Now, we are faced with the possible closure of TMI's Unit 1 this fall (and we remain opposed to any ratepayer subsidy of nuclear energy that would stave off that closure). We also face continuing concern about the radioactive uranium and plutonium that will remain indefinitely at TMI. Crable was spot-on when he wrote that the memories from March 28, 1979, and the days after are "burned into the collective consciousness of a generation."...

WILLIAMSPORT SUN-GAZETTE

More Money Heads Toward Williamsport Levee Recertification The Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce is giving \$500,000 toward the levee recertification, while an authority overseeing water and sanitary service for thousands of customers reviews a \$1 million request. "We are giving \$500,000 toward the levee project," said Jason Fink, chamber executive director at the morning member connection meeting Wednesday at the Genetti Hotel. The donation is expected to provide leverage for the project in terms of future proposed federal dollars, he explained. Later that day, the Williamsport Municipal Water and Sanitary Authority, following a question from William Nichols Sr., tabled any action on a request from Lycoming County commissioners for the authority to give \$1 million toward the levee recertification process. Instead, the authority voted to hold off on the decision, placing it into the hands of Joseph Orso, its solicitor, so the attorney can determine whether the authority has the legal right under the Municipal Authorities Act to grant such a request. The recertification process is estimated to cost \$16 million if done over the next five years. The next phase is to use a \$2 million state Redevelopment Assistance Capital Projects grant to install relief wells, said Fran McJunkin, deputy director of the county Planning Department and a "levee go-to-person" and spokeswoman for the Greater Williamsport Levee Group. The levee also needs to have replaced crosspipes and heightened and stronger wall along the Lycoming Creek side, McJunkin said. The recertification is required as part of stricter regulations on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-built levees following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

PA ENVIRONMENT DIGEST BLOG (By PA DEP)

U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers Issues Contractor Notice To Proceed With Remediation Of Parks Township Radioactive Waste Site In Armstrong County On March 28, the U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers Buffalo District issued a notice to proceed to its contractor for the remediation of the radioactive waste site in Parks Township, Armstrong County. The notice was issued to the Jacobs company for development of work site and safety plans as well as excavation, storage and transport processing of radioactively contaminated soils and waste. USACE estimates the 10-year indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (ID/IQ) single-award task order contract (SATOC) to include a five-year base period and a five-year option period with a capacity value of \$350 million. "Winning this project involving challenging radiological waste remediation increases our global nuclear market presence and leverages our depth of environmental experience," said Jacobs Aerospace, Technology and Nuclear Senior Vice President Steve Arnette. "We are pleased to partner with USACE at the SLDA site to achieve cleanup with the highest regards to safety, quality and schedule as we provide remediation solutions for a more connected and sustainable world."...

PA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Planning Steering Committee Meets April 3 To Review First Draft Of Plan The PA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan Steering Committee is scheduled to meet on April 3 to review the first draft of the Watershed Implementation Plan that includes recommendations from the Committee workgroups and other elements...

Keep PA Beautiful Earns National Recognition From Keep America Beautiful With President's Circle Award On March 28, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful announced it had earned national recognition from Keep America Beautiful and received the Diamond State Affiliate President's Circle Award. The Award was presented at KAB's recent National Conference in Baltimore. In qualifying for the President's Circle Award, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful has met Keep America Beautiful's standards of merit by administering initiatives to end littering, improve recycling, and beautify Pennsylvania's communities. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful was honored for its outstanding promotion of Keep America Beautiful's mission statewide and for its program support for local affiliates in Pennsylvania, distinguishing itself as an exemplary statewide affiliate organization. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful earned the Diamond Award, the highest recognition, for its implementation of multiple community improvement programs, including:...

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Pa.)

'Filthadelphia' tries to shed nickname by cleaning streets PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The City of Brotherly Love was once revolutionary when it came to clean streets, gutters and sidewalks. Benjamin Franklin launched one of America's first street sweeping programs here in the late 1750s. In 1952, the city tied with Memphis, Tennessee, as the nation's cleanest. Those distinctions are long gone. Poverty and litter often go hand in hand, and "Filthadelphia" is the nation's poorest big city. In the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, and after mounting grumblings by residents who didn't want to move their cars, Philadelphia scrapped its residential street sweeping program, leaving it the only city of its size in the country without one. Now some neighborhoods struggling with litter have decided to take collection into their own hands. Last month, a nonprofit neighborhood group in the city's Germantown section started rounds of litter collection with its own trash truck. Other neighborhood associations are paying for human street sweepers or professional trash collection companies. The low-income Germantown neighborhood has a persistent litter problem, in addition to problems with gun violence, blight and, sometimes, a sense of hopelessness. "This is us stepping up to the plate to be part of the solution, because a lot of this litter isn't something the city can control," said Jordan Ferrarini, whose group, Trades for a Difference, bought the Germantown truck. "It's something being done in the community, and has to do with the psychology of the neighborhood." His group hires young people from the neighborhood to work in litter collection and hopes to expand the duties to beautification projects and plantings. The idea is to provide jobs in the neighborhood and to build a sense of community and pride, he said. City officials see no shame in neighborhood groups buying their own trash trucks to deal with litter problems. Carlton Williams, streets commissioner, said the Germantown group's idea isn't to replace the city's trash collection efforts, but to complement them. He's all for it. "Litter is a partnership effort," he said. "That is the key to success, and it's great that they want to be ambitious. We're fully supportive." Across the city, neighborhoods working class to wealthy have come up with ways to manage street cleanliness. Mayor Jim Kenney announced in his budget address this month that he'll reinvest in street sweeping, starting with a pilot program for a handful of neighborhoods this spring....

DELAWARE

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL

Croda faces nearly \$250,000 fine for air, water pollution following toxic gas leak in November A chemical manufacturing plant at the base of the Delaware Memorial Bridge is facing nearly \$250,000 in fines for pollution stemming from a toxic gas leak in November. Croda Inc. will pay \$246,739 in fines and penalties after Delaware environmental regulators found the company at fault for the release of more than 2,600 pounds of ethylene oxide, a known carcinogen that is also flammable and explosive. The leak shut down traffic on the bridge and Interstate 295 for seven hours on the Sunday evening after Thanksgiving for fear of fire or people inhaling the highly toxic chemical. The company also recently reimbursed the Delaware River & Bay Authority nearly \$150,000 in lost tolls. The leak was caused by a failed gasket,

which the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control said failed because it was made of unsuitable material for processing of ethylene oxide. Croda uses ethylene oxide to make surfactants and emulsifiers, chemicals industrial customers use to create liquids that combine mixtures that otherwise would separate, like in face creams and cosmetics. Croda had been using the chemical at the plant along the Delaware River for years, but had just recently started manufacturing the chemical on-site. The settlement order announced on Thursday also reveals that Croda began operations at the new plant without the state's stamp of approval. "Croda agrees it made an administrative error" in scheduling an inspection, resulting in Croda operating the ethylene oxide plant without proper approvals for most of the month of October, the settlement order states. Following the November gas leak, the company ceased production at the new plant, which was approved in 2015. The plant is just part of Croda's footprint at the Atlas Point facility on Cherry Lane near New Castle. A DNREC spokesman confirmed on Thursday that ethylene oxide manufacturing operations at the plant have not yet resumed. "Once we satisfy the other actions prescribed by DNREC for approval to restart, and both we and DNREC agree it is once again safe to operate the EO plant, the Croda team will resume the production of EO," said company spokeswoman Cara Eaton in an email. Aside from the monetary penalty, the settlement order also includes a "comprehensive sampling plan, to confirm there are no environmental effects from this incident," Eaton said...

DELAWARE CAPE GAZETTE

Tickets available for Southern Delaware Oysterfest in Lewes To benefit Delaware Wild Lands and Greater Lewes Foundation Tickets are going fast for the Southern Delaware Oysterfest sponsored by Jack Lingo Realtor, set for 12 to 3 p.m., Saturday, April 6, at The Beacon Motel in Lewes, to benefit Delaware Wild Lands Inc. and the Greater Lewes Foundation. Tickets will include raw and fried oysters, sides from The Pig and Publican restaurant, live music from Electric Velvet Duo, beer from Dogfish Head Brewery and wine from Bin 66. Carrie Lingo, a Lingo family member and leader of the Carrie Lingo Team, said, "There are three reasons to come out to this afternoon of fun: firstly, for great food; secondly, for great music; thirdly, to support two phenomenal organizations that do so much good for our community." Oysterfest will benefit two of Delaware's most important nonprofits. Delaware Wild Lands Inc. is a conservation organization which has helped protect 30,000 acres of land across Delmarva. The organization currently owns and manages 20,000 acres of land with the mission of protecting the region's air, water, wildlife, farms and forests. The Greater Lewes Foundation exists to encourage and facilitate philanthropic endeavors throughout Lewes, thereby enhancing the area's quality of life. Residents of Lewes can utilize the foundation to create an individual or family fund in support of whatever cause they wish. These two wonderful organizations need community support to continue doing their work.

MIDDLETOWN TRANSCRIPT

Divisions of Air Quality, Waste & Hazardous Substances to hold public workshops The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Division of Air Quality and the Tank Management Section within DNREC's Division of Waste & Hazardous Substances will hold two public workshops in April. The workshops will focus on proposed vapor emission recovery and vapor emission control at gas-dispensing stations and on changes to Delaware's Underground Storage Tank Regulations as required by new federal UST regulations. Both workshops will be held April 16 for New Castle County, 10 a.m., at DNREC's Lukens Drive field office, 391 Lukens Drive, New Castle; and for Kent and Sussex counties, 6:30 p.m., DNREC Auditorium, Richardson & Robbins Building, 89 Kings Highway, Dover. At the workshops, staff from the Division of Air Quality and the Tank Management Section will discuss proposed regulatory changes to phase out Stage II vapor recovery systems at Delaware gasoline dispensing facilities, ensure gasoline USTs remain vapor tight and review changes required due to the promulgation of new federal UST regulations. For more, visit publicmeetings.delaware.gov/meeting/62548 and publicmeetings.delaware.gov/meeting/62549.

Carper gives opening statement at EPW hearing on PFAS risks Sen. Tom Carper gave the opening statement at the March 28 U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing "Examining the federal response to the risks associated with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)" "Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for scheduling this hearing," said Carper. "Just last week, Administrator Wheeler said that access to clean drinking water was, and I quote, 'the biggest environmental threat.' In a typical administration, one could...

WEST VIRGINIA

WEST VIRGINIA PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Celebrating the Women Who Protect W.Va.'s Water This morning we pay homage to women who have worked to preserve the state's environment -- especially the water. A collaborative art exhibit at West Virginia University focuses on one of the state's most abundant resources: water. And celebrates the many women who protect it. Brittany Patterson visited to find out more. Headlines also include developments in news surrounding the former bishop of the state's Catholic Church who is facing new legal allegations of drunken, sexual assault. Also the latest on a piece of federal legislation designed to facilitate clean up and redevelop surface mine land in Appalachia. Sydney Boles reports, the bill will face challenges despite bipartisan support. And Dave Mistich reports about Gov. Justice signing 266 pieces of legislation and vetoing 28 just ahead of a deadline to act on bills. West Virginia Morning is a production of West Virginia Public Broadcasting which is solely responsible for its content. Support for our news bureaus comes from West Virginia University, Concord University, and Shepherd University.

CHART: Where Disease-Carrying Mosquitoes Will Go In The Future Disease-bearing mosquitoes are on the move. Scientists have been pretty sure of that for decades. As temperatures rise in certain parts of the world, warmth-seeking mosquitoes will invade, making themselves at home in previously inhospitable patches of the globe. Now researchers are trying to figure out exactly how far north these mosquitoes will migrate. Based on estimates of future temperatures across the world, the authors of a study published this week in PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases mapped where the mosquitoes that transmit diseases like dengue and Zika might travel if climate change continues unchecked. Based on their worst-case scenario projections, the researchers believe as many as a billion people could be newly exposed to these illnesses within the century. "We're really worried about major urban centers in places like Europe, the United States and China especially," says Colin Carlson, co-lead author of the study and postdoctoral fellow at Georgetown University, who specializes in ecological modeling. The models produced by the team of researchers focus on two types of mosquitoes: *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*. The researchers used four different climate change scenarios to predict where temperatures will be suitable for mosquitoes to thrive in the years 2050 and 2080. (It's important to note that just because the temperatures are OK for the mosquitoes, doesn't mean diseases will spread.) The researchers found *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* will likely creep north over the next half century, beginning to breed in parts of North America, Europe and East Asia where it had previously been too cold. *Aedes albopictus*, also known as the Asian tiger mosquito — which Carlson says is better adapted to the cold — will lead the charge, potentially carrying diseases like yellow fever, dengue and chikungunya...

WEST VIRGINIA METRO NEWS

Rockwool protesters gather at Danish Embassy; some detained by DC Police WASHINGTON, D.C. — A group traveled from the Eastern Panhandle to the Danish Embassy to protest the controversial Rockwool insulation plant in Jefferson County. A Facebook Live feed from Resist Rockwool, who organized the trip, showed multiple protesters being detained by DC Police at around 1:40 pm Thursday. In a Wednesday release, Resist Rockwool said they intended to talk to Acting Danish Ambassador Henrik Hahn "on the double standard that protects the Danish public from a toxic polluter while threatening the health of vulnerable populations with heavy industrial development of sites like Rockwool".

About 2,000 tires burned in Huntington blaze HUNTINGTON, W.Va. — The Huntington fire department arrived to a burning mess Thursday morning on Hal Greer Boulevard. A pair of semi trucks were on fire in the parking lot of Po-Boy's Tires in Huntington. The trucks were loaded with tires and a large number of tires stored in a fenced yard of the business were also burning. "We had anywhere from 1,500 to 2,000 tires burning," said Huntington Fire Chief Jan Rader. The blaze sent a plume of thick, black smoke hundreds of feet into the air and was visible for miles in the cloudless morning sky. Crews attacked the fire from above with an aerial apparatus to pour water onto the blaze, which prompted calls to the Department of Environmental Protection and the city's water department. Officials from those agencies were on hand to make certain the

runoff from the effort was being handled appropriately. "We contained it mainly with water, but to overhaul we used about 40 gallons of foam," Rader explained on MetroNews Talkline. "When you're dealing with a tire fire, you're dealing with hydrocarbons." Crews arrived around 7:40 a.m. but didn't have the fire out until around 10:15 a.m. "We brought in a bulldozer to help move around the tires to make sure we didn't have any smoldering pieces in between," Rader said. "We were finally comfortable we had it out and left the scene by 11 o'clock." Fire fighters were able to save the building, but Rader said about 1,500 tires in the business inventory were destroyed and the owners indicated there was no insurance...

HAGERSTOWN HERALD MAIL

Public hearings set on Berkeley County water, sewer fees MARTINSBURG, W. Va. — Public hearings on proposals by the water and sewer districts in Berkeley County, W. Va., to levy capacity-improvement fees will be held Thursday. The hearings are set to begin at 11 a.m. during the Berkeley County Council's regular meeting at the county administration building at 400 W. Stephen St. in Martinsburg. A consultant retained to calculate the meter-size-based fees recommended one-time charges of \$2,012 for water and \$2,852 for sewer for a 5/8-inch residential meter, but the fees are proposed to be phased in over two years to give developers time to build the fees into future plans and allow time for the market to adapt, the public utility districts said Thursday in a joint statement. If approved, the fees only would affect the construction of new homes and businesses, and wouldn't increase the cost of water and sewer service to existing customers, officials said. The council is expected to vote on the proposal April 11. "Berkeley County residents who are concerned about the cost pressures on local services as a result of growth should support the implementation of capacity-improvement fees," the statement said. The statement emphasized in bold type that the principle of the fees is to have "growth pay for growth." The fees are projected to generate about \$3.4 million for capital investments for the separately run public utilities, and council members were assured Thursday that funds would be put into a separate account and not used for operating and maintenance expenses. Because of the limited use of the funds, customers' existing rates won't decrease, said Greg Rhoe, a member of the respective governing boards for the public-utility districts. In a discussion about the proposed fees Thursday, Rhoe emphasized that the funds generated wouldn't be paid by existing customers and the fees would help moderate rate increases that existing customers see in the future while allowing continued growth...

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE SUN

Time for spring cleaning neighborhoods and waterways As spring arrives, the Clarksville community is coming to life with an abundance of outdoor activities. Volunteers are needed to help Mother Nature with spring cleaning. Families, Scout troops, neighbors and friends are encouraged to collect trash from open space areas in the River Hill neighborhood on Saturday, March 30, from 10 a.m. to noon. Supplies for the event will be distributed at Claret Hall by the Columbia Association and the River Hill Community Association Watershed Committee. Students may earn service hours for their participation. To register, email events@villageofriverhill.org or call 410-531-1749. Although swimming season is still a ways off, the River Hill pool parking lot will play host to two pollution solution projects on Saturday, April 6. Stop by from 1 to 4 p.m. to build oyster habitats for the Chesapeake Bay. Participants will help to create structures out of specialized concrete that, when placed in the bay, will become home to generations of oysters. The hollow "oyster-reef balls" are open on the top and have holes on the sides so that aquatic animals can swim through them. A single reef ball can provide approximately 2,000 oysters with a safe place to live. Each oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water each day. The second pollution-prevention project will be the creation of a rain garden that will "slow the flow" of pollutants into local waterways. A garden of native plants and flowers will be planted to replace an old storm water drain. Not only will the rain garden help to reduce the rate of rainwater runoff, it will also attract pollinators and make the area more beautiful. The event will be held rain or shine. The registration deadline is April 1. Sign up by sending an email to

events@villageofriverhill.org. The project is a partnership between the River Hill Watershed Advisory Committee, Columbia Association, Chesapeake Bay Trust and Coastal Conservation Association Maryland...

Sarbanes, Ruppersberger talk climate change and Green New Deal in Baltimore County At a town hall meeting in Towson on Thursday night, two Baltimore-area congressmen emphasized their commitment to fighting climate change now that Democrats have the majority in the House of Representatives. More than 60 people attended the town hall in the Towson branch library to ask questions of Democratic Reps. John Sarbanes of District 3 and C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger of District 2. They told the congressmen that they want climate change addressed urgently. "Nuclear war, climate change, those are the two things that could do away with all of us," one man said. Joe Garonzik, of Rodgers Forge, attended the meeting and said he wants a plan for action. "People have to figure out how to address these problems," he said. "To continue to try to sweep this problem under the rug is insane." Sarbanes and Ruppersberger each represent parts of Towson. Rep. Elijah Cummings was scheduled to attend but was unable to do so and a member of his staff attended instead. Many of the public's questions were about the Green New Deal, an ambitious climate resolution spearheaded by New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Sarbanes and Ruppersberger are both co-sponsors of the bill. Ruppersberger, a self-described moderate Democrat, said he has gotten flak from more conservative constituents for co-sponsoring the bill and has been called a "socialist." He was initially hesitant to sign on to the bill until he read a statement of support from Sarbanes and realized that, while details still need to be worked out, its goals — to curb greenhouse gas emissions, to secure jobs and access to food and health care — were things he supports. "It's nonbinding, but it's a beginning," Ruppersberger said. "It's a plan, and we'd been stuck in the mud a long time." The congressmen also faced challenges from constituents. One man who identified himself as a member of progressive group Indivisible Baltimore, asked whether Ruppersberger would sign a pledge not to knowingly accept campaign contributions from fossil fuel companies. Sarbanes has already signed the pledge. But Ruppersberger said he will not; though he maintains energy companies do not affect his decision-making, he said in a competitive district like his he will not risk losing campaign dollars...

SALISBURY DAILY TIMES

Report: Accomack poultry house expansion nearing end The recent expansion of poultry operations in Accomack may be nearing an end, according to a county official. Since July 1, 2014, 245 new poultry broiler houses in Accomack were been authorized by zoning permits, according to a report from the county's planning department. "Not all those were built," said Rich Morrison, deputy Accomack County administrator building, planning and economic development. Morrison gave the Accomack Board of Supervisors an update March 20 on the poultry industry's activity in the county over the past year. Of the total number of poultry houses authorized since 2014, 218 had been constructed as of Feb. 1. "The 218 is really the number that are on the ground. We reported last year that some of the houses authorized by the zoning permit would not be constructed," Morrison said. Eleven of the 218 built were authorized since Jan. 1, 2018, according to Morrison. There were 254 poultry houses in operation in the county prior to July 1, 2014, according to the report. "We believe the 254 and 218 are what we have in the county," Morrison said, adding staff thought the recent expansion of the number of poultry houses in Accomack was nearing an end. "As expected, the numbers of new poultry operations seeking zoning permits has dwindled," the report said, predicting by the end of 2019 "most poultry-related construction should be complete." Supervisor Grayson Chesser said some of the 254 houses operating before July 2014 are older and may not still be in use. "I think the number's inflated as far as the ones actually being used," he said. There are no zoning permits pending, according to the report. Staff are aware of plans for an eight-house operation near Hallwood, for which a permit application has yet to be filed. There also is interest in a two-house expansion of an existing poultry farm, according to the report, which did not give a location...

Sea level rise: Saltwater intrusion laying waste to Delmarva farms ...The Chesapeake Bay Program computer model estimates that guide the bay cleanup may need to be revised to account for saltwater impacts in some locations, ...

CHESAPEAKE BAY JOURNAL

Grounded! Soil is home to thousands of organisms, ranging in size from microscopic bacteria to larger animals like the ones listed here. Can you match the animal to its description? Answers are below...

CECIL WHIG

APG commander Taylor to be reassigned this summer ABERDEEN — When U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Randy Taylor leaves his assignment as Aberdeen Proving Ground's senior commander this summer, he will leave behind a strong bond forged between APG and Cecil County that many top county officials hope will endure. Taylor, a two-star general who assumed control of the local military installation in April 2017, has been reassigned to serve as the chief of staff of U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) and as the senior Army officer at STRATCOM's global headquarters, at the Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Neb. He will be third in succession at STRATCOM, after commander Gen. John E. Hyten, a U.S. Air Force four-star general, and U.S. Navy three-star deputy commander, Vice Admiral David M. Kriete. STRATCOM serves as the nation's joint-service global war fighting command, with 162,000 Americans achieving its missions in strategic deterrence, nuclear operations, space operations, global strike, missile defense, and analysis and targeting... In addition to increased communication with APG, Meffley said that Taylor was also interested in efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay from harmful nutrient pollution that builds up behind the Conowingo Dam and flows past after storm events. Meffley indicated that Taylor wanted "APG to be a voice." "I hope to meet the new guy with Taylor so we can keep on the same track," the council president said. "He was very interested in the people of Cecil County, and you don't find that a lot." ...

SOUTHERN MARYLAND NEWS

Chesapeake Bay water quality reaches all-time high since 1985 The water quality of the Chesapeake Bay was reported to be the cleanest since testing began in 1985, reaching a record high of 42 percent of bay water meeting clean water standards between 2015 and 2017, the Chesapeake Bay Program announced this week. The regional partnership attributed the improvements largely to reductions in algae growth and increases in underwater grass abundance and dissolved oxygen in the open waters of the bay. As a key indicator of the bay's health, the bay's water quality has been monitored since 1985. New research published by the bay program described the trends seen in the water quality of the bay "positive and statistically significant," according to a release from the organization. The bay program said the findings show that the bay is resilient, and recovery efforts invested by various partners to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution are working. While there's cause to celebrate, bay experts also noted the reality that 58 percent of tidal waters are still considered impaired and the impact of last year's record rainfall remains to be seen. Heavy rain not only leads to high river flows and heavy flooding, as it did last year, it also washes a large amount of fresh water into the bay, bringing more sediments and nutrients into bay waters. "I'm pretty confident to say that 2018 will not be a continuation of that positive trend," Jeremy Testa, assistant professor at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's Chesapeake Biological Laboratory in Solomons, said by phone Wednesday. In local waterways like the Patuxent River, Testa said there have already been indicators that may suggest water quality declined last year. Underwater grass, for example, was not as robust as it was in 2017. "In 2017, a lot of sea grass emerged in areas we had not seen," he said. "Some of those beds did not come back" last year. Testa said the likely culprit could be higher nutrient concentration in the water, which is tied to high precipitation that generally washes more nutrients into the bay. Despite the likely bad news, Testa said the year 2018 may be the first test on the resiliency of the bay after years of restoration efforts.

VIRGINIA

VIRGINIA MERCURY

Senators decry administration's 'lack of urgency' on toxic chemicals WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has failed to act swiftly enough to protect the public from harmful contaminants present in drinking water throughout the country, U.S. senators told senior administration officials Thursday. Democrats and Republicans alike expressed frustration over the federal government's response to the widespread drinking water contamination by chemicals known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, at a Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on the issue. The man-made chemicals — used in everything from fire-fighting foam to clothing and nonstick pans — are found on military bases and in other U.S. communities. They have been linked to cancer and other serious health problems, and environmental and public health advocates want faster cleanup and strict guidelines for allowable limits in drinking water. "Far too many communities worry about the quality of their drinking water in this country," Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) said at the hearing, where officials from the Environmental Protection Agency and the

Department of Defense testified about the federal response to the health risks associated with the chemicals. EPA and DOD, Duckworth said, have “failed to understand the scope of the PFAS problem and they’ve failed to determine how to dispose of the chemical — which persists in the environment and our bodies — and regulate the chemical.” The Trump EPA announced an “action plan” in February to address the health problems, but critics say it isn’t aggressive enough, and the administration won’t commit to a timeline for regulation. David Ross, EPA’s top water official, said the agency is committed to “proposing a regulatory determination this year” and would “move through that process as expeditiously as possible.” But he declined to give a timeline for regulating PFAS in drinking water. “It’s a long process, to be frank,” Ross said, adding that the agency was committed to using the best science possible...

Softer tone emerges in meetings between community, military over munitions plant pollution CHRISTIANSBURG — Lt. Col. James Scott’s first community meeting as commander of the Radford Army Ammunition Plant two years ago began as a standoff. Armed police officers stood watch around the perimeter of the room. Community members sat in chairs on one side. Army officials and staffers from BAE Systems, the private contractor that operates the plant — regularly listed as Virginia’s biggest polluter and the scene of a deadly fire last year — sat behind tables on the other side. The meeting began with a recitation of the stern rules governing the gathering. Scott’s final community meeting, on a March weeknight at the Christiansburg public library nearly two years later, went much more smoothly. “You can see what we’ve grown here,” Scott told a group of about 25 citizens. “No longer the armed police officers in the back of the room. No longer (us) sitting behind the tables.” “No more reading the rules,” added BAE Systems spokesman Chris Finley. “The community has chosen, and those that are here have chosen, to want to solve problems,” Scott said. “Instead of just throwing the proverbial chair, they want to be a part of the solution. We don’t all have to agree. We just have to work together to find a better positive ground for our community, ourselves.” So what happened to smooth out relations between officials from the facility and its neighbors in the New River Valley? A simple willingness to listen and share concerns, they say. Also, \$150 million-plus in recent and planned investments by the Department of Defense to build new facilities that will cut 95 percent of the plant’s emissions by 2023...

ROANOKE TIMES

Northam’s push to overhaul DEQ moving forward LEXINGTON — Plans to overhaul the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, launched one year ago, are starting to take shape. A report with recommendations will be released next month pursuant to an executive order from Gov. Ralph Northam, who directed DEQ staff, in consultation with the secretary of natural resources, to review the agency’s permitting, monitoring and enforcement activities. What administration officials call a “revitalization” comes as Virginia deals with the construction of two massive natural gas pipelines, the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay, efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other natural resource issues. Speaking Wednesday at Virginia Military Institute, Northam also acknowledged that the intersection of racial and environmental issues has been shaped by the recent controversy over his appearance in blackface years ago and his subsequent efforts to mend relations with minorities. “We’re refocused, there’s no question,” he told reporters after his speech to the Environment Virginia Symposium. A key part of Northam’s executive order — which he unveiled a year ago at the same gathering — seeks to improve the way DEQ communicates with the public. An outcry over plans to build a compressor station for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline in a predominantly black community in Buckingham County was cited as one example of the need for enhanced outreach. The environment “is our birthright as Virginians and Americans, and it belongs to all of us, no matter the color of our skin or the size of our pocketbooks,” Northam told attendees of the 30th annual symposium. In remarks preceding the governor’s address, Secretary of Natural Resources Matt Strickler said administration officials are looking forward to working with the Virginia Advisory Council on Environmental Justice. Last August, a former version of the council created by former Gov. Terry McAuliffe recommended that work be suspended on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and a similar natural gas project under construction in Southwest Virginia, the Mountain Valley Pipeline...

NEWPORT NEWS DAILY PRESS

Hampton council receives updates on water management projects involving roadways, parking lots In Hampton, when it comes to finding ways to living with water, the first order of business is to do something with the city’s ditches and its impervious surfaces — namely, parking lots. “We want to re-imagine those ditches,” said Terry O’Neill, Hampton’s director of community development. “Parking lots are some of the biggest offenders. Water hits those surfaces and runs out into the creek. We think there is a resilient way, a more green way, to work with those challenges.” O’Neill gave the

Hampton City Council on Wednesday an update and a big-picture view on efforts toward mitigating recurring flooding and storm water pollution, called the “Resilient Hampton” project. The plan includes looking at natural systems — taking a nod from experts living in the Netherlands — to find new designs and better ways to live with water and deal with sea level rise. The council took action on measures related to the Resilient Hampton endeavor. One was to pass a resolution to join the American Flood Coalition — a group of 131 members in several states, according to its website — that seek to explore resources and find best practices, which will aid Hampton’s ability to address these issues, O’Neill said. In addition, O’Neill and the planning department sought the council’s blessing to begin some near-term projects — a lofty list of changes to some major city roads, ditches, parking lots and other impervious surfaces, which he outlined Wednesday. “Four words ... to slow, store, redirect and adapt,” O’Neill said, noting that is the goal with redesigning different areas within the Newmarket Creek watershed, creating a greenway and finding spaces for water on large public properties. A pilot project would begin looking at the ditch by Forrest Elementary School, near Todd’s Lane, toward using it to help slow and store water. The ditch runs from the school, pass under Mercury Boulevard toward the former Mallory School, which was on Big Bethel Road. Another project to begin is to redesign the Crossroads parking lot near Pine Chapel Road and to raise roadways, specifically Armistead and LaSalle avenues. “Raise the roads and using the road itself to store water ... to give us a storage capacity,” he said. “If you’re looking for places to store water, you look at land you own and that is (your) critical roadways.”...

VIRGINIA PUBLIC RADIO

Virginia's First Green Cemetery The National Funeral Directors Association reports a typical viewing and burial can cost more than \$7,000 on average, and that doesn’t count the price of a spot in the cemetery. That’s one factor feeding a growing trend toward cremation and natural burials. Duck Run Natural Cemetery is about six miles southeast of Harrisonburg, on a farm road suitably named Windswept Lane. When this 113-acre site came up for sale, Kenny Kyger had an idea. His family owned funeral homes, and some customers were unhappy with the usual products on offer. “They didn’t want vaults,” says Glenn Jennelle, the cemetery’s manager. “They didn’t want caskets. They didn’t want headstones. They just wanted plain, simple back to nature.” In 2011, he and Kyger began clearing the land, enlarging a pond for catch and release fishing, building a shelter and a bridge over the creek known as Duck Run. It was 25 years since the land was grazed by dairy cows, and Jennelle’s crew couldn’t use chemicals to kill weeds. Over a two-year period they worked with hand tools to manicure the land – complying with guidelines issued by the Green Burial Council. Today the property is covered by grass, wildflowers and trees native to the Shenandoah Valley. “From where we’re standing now you can actually see the Blue Ridge Mountains,” says Jennelle. “The Massanutten Mountains, the Allegheny Mountains -- t’s absolutely beautiful.” People buried here arrive in bio-degradable wooden caskets or wrapped in a simple cloth shroud. “I’d say 75-80% of people we have interred here are in body shrouds,” he adds. Bodies are embalmed with natural fluids or not at all, and the caskets contain no metal. That’s important because each year the United States buries enough steel to build the Golden Gate Bridge and puts 827,000 gallons of toxic embalming chemicals in the ground. Other burial grounds like the Eco-Eternity Memorial Forest near Williamsburg will only accept cremated remains – an increasingly popular choice in this country. In 1975 only six percent of America’s dead were cremated. Today more than a third of us choose that option, and the Cremation Association of North America says it’ll be more than half by 2025...

Northam Proposes Regional Gas Tax, Fee Increases to Fund Interstate 81 Improvements Just a few hundred yards from the traffic in Salem, Governor Ralph Northam made a new pitch to improve Interstate 81...

MISCELLANEOUS

GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE

White House Finalizes 1.9 Percent Pay Raise for Civilian Feds President Trump on Thursday signed an executive order authorizing a 1.9 percent pay increase for federal employees this year, retroactive to January, ending six weeks of waiting and speculation about when the measure would be implemented. On Feb. 15, Trump enacted a spending package to keep the government open through September that included a 1.4 percent across-the-board pay increase for

civilian federal workers and an average 0.5 percent increase in their locality pay for this year. The provision was retroactive to the first pay period of the year, which began Jan. 6. But since then, it had been unclear when the measure would be implemented. Last week, acting Office of Personnel Management Director Margaret Weichert told reporters that the process was very “legalistic” but that the pay raise was in the “final clearance” stages. Pay tables on OPM’s website had not yet been updated as of mid-Thursday afternoon and the agency did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Depending on how quickly federal payroll processors are able to switch over to the new pay tables, federal employees could see the raise reflected in their paychecks as early as next week. But it is unclear when they will receive lump sum payments to cover what they are owed as part of the retroactive portion of the pay increase.

The TSP and Your Retirement Date Delaying retirement can complicate your Thrift Savings Plan withdrawal situation...

BLOOMBERG ENVIRONMENT

EPA Tackles Worker Safety Charges in 13 New Chemical Rules The EPA March 28 tackled head on allegations that it neglected worker safety protections in deciding to allow new chemicals to enter commerce, releasing “significant new use rules” for 13 substances. The final rules include at least four pages in which the Environmental Protection Agency responds to public comments alleging the agency’s new chemicals program systematically fails to protect has failed to protect workers and violates TSCA in other ways. The rules provide a “rock solid” legal argument supporting EPA’s position that it is protecting worker health as it decides whether new chemicals may be manufactured or imported into the U.S., Lynn Bergeson, managing partner of Bergeson & Campbell, PC, told Bloomberg Environment...

Abandoned Mine Cleanup Effort Kick-Started in House House Republicans broadly agreed with Democrats on the need to act on the nation’s \$10 billion backlog of abandoned mines that are leaching pollution into soil and water. The issue of helping states clean up abandoned coal mines marked a rare show of bipartisanship on the usually fractious House Natural Resources subcommittee on energy and mineral resources, which held a March 28 hearing on the issue. Environmentalists called on lawmakers at the hearing to restart legislation that has failed to become law in the past. The problem now, as in previous Congresses, isn’t the other party—it’s the Senate, which in the past has shown little interest in taking up the issue...

GREENWIRE / E&E NEWS

Lawmakers urge feds to act faster on PFAS Lawmakers on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee yesterday urged federal officials to move more quickly to address toxic nonstick chemicals. Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), the panel’s ranking member, repeatedly criticized EPA’s response to concerns about per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, saying the agency didn’t seem to be acting with urgency. The persistent synthetic chemicals used in a wide variety of consumer and industrial products, including firefighting foam, have earned the moniker “forever chemicals,” and some have been linked to health problems such as certain cancers and liver disease. “I hope the witnesses before us today will commit to moving forward with a range of measures to protect Americans with an appropriate amount of urgency to befit a problem that Administrator [Andrew] Wheeler himself says is part of the biggest environmental threat that we face in this country,” Carper said. Panel Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) had pledged after EPA released its PFAS action plan last month that he would hold a hearing on the plan. He also said the agency needed to “speak clearly” about the risks posed by PFAS. Carper asked Linda Birnbaum, director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and National Toxicology Program at the National Institutes of Health, whether she senses an urgency from EPA that he doesn’t. Birnbaum said NIEHS is working with EPA’s Office of Research and Development to study more than 100 PFAS and determine whether they can be grouped into classes. Those results should be available “in months, not years,” she said. After Carper pressed her to answer the urgency question more specifically, she said, “EPA appears to be interested in moving more rapidly than they have in the past on dealing with these PFAS chemicals. And I applaud that effort.” David Ross, EPA’s assistant administrator for the Office of Water, said he knows urgency when he sees it. “I see it every single day with the career employees who are working around the clock and, in fact, have pulled all-nighters on this issue ... and we say that EPA is not doing enough? That’s a disservice to those people who are doing something every single day.”...

Enforcement: EPA, DOJ officials defend Trump’s record DENVER — Career officials at EPA and the Justice Department went on the defensive today in a debate about the Trump administration’s enforcement record. DOJ environment lawyer Bruce Gelber said the idea that “environmental scofflaws are out there in the street dancing with joy” due to lax

enforcement is "largely bunk." Gelber is a high-ranking career official in the Environment and Natural Resources Division and has been with the team since 1985. He made the remarks during a panel discussion on compliance and enforcement at the American Bar Association's environmental law conference here. He debated the administration's record with Hudson Riverkeeper President Paul Gallay, who argued that the government's current level of enforcement is "aberrant" compared with levels during the George W. Bush administration... Suzanne Bohan, acting regional administrator for enforcement in EPA Region 8 in Denver, highlighted the agency's efforts to use all available tools to improve compliance with environmental standards. Those include inspections, she said, but "inspection numbers don't tell the whole story." EPA also makes frequent information requests from regulated industries, tries to assist with compliance efforts, and uses other "carrots and sticks" to enforce the laws and regulations, said Bohan, who has been at EPA since 1990. She also acknowledged that her enforcement team is stretched thin but is focused on compliance initiatives that prioritize lead exposure, chemical accidents, areas that aren't in attainment with the Clean Air Act and other big issues. With "a president who says he wants to eliminate EPA in almost every form," Gallay said, "I've got to call b.s." "He's a president who says a lot," Gelber replied.

N.J. sues 3 firms over PFAS pollution Two days after ordering them to clean up chemical contamination in various spots, New Jersey is suing three companies over pollution issues. The state Attorney General's Office filed four lawsuits yesterday against DuPont, Chemours and 3M. They were among firms targeted by the state Monday to clean up contamination from chemicals used to stain-proof clothing and make nonstick cookware, called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS. Some of the firms said they are already addressing the situation and pledged cooperation with the state, while others did not comment. The suits each focus on a manufacturing sites in Pennsville and Carneys Point Township; Sayreville; Greenwich Township; and Pompton Lakes.

Interior: Bernhardt sails through hearing Interior secretary nominee David Bernhardt today appeared to move smoothly through his Senate confirmation hearing despite being shadowed by demonstrators and denounced by some Democrats.

NJ SPOTLIGHT

Chemours Quantifies Toxic PFAS Substitute Sent to South Jersey Plant Revelation raises fresh concerns over possible contamination of local drinking water as scientists say GenX may be just as hazardous as the chemical it's designed to replace. The chemical company Chemours shipped thousands of pounds of a toxic PFAS substitute to its Chambers Works site in South Jersey between 2015 and 2018, and generated specific quantities of chemical waste at the plant over a longer period, according to a newly released document that raises fresh concerns over the possible contamination of local drinking water. In a report to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the company quantified nine shipments of GenX, a replacement for the PFAS chemical PFOA, to the plant over the three-year period. It also provided exact quantities of GenX waste that were generated as part of waste streams containing other materials between 2009 and 2017. The inbound shipments ranged from 3,451 kilograms (7,608 pounds) in January 2016 to 2,043 kg (4,504 pounds) in June 2017 — quantities that dwarf the tiny amounts, measured in parts per trillion, that New Jersey regulators have set as safe health limits for some other PFAS chemicals in drinking water. Although GenX has not been studied as fully as better-known PFAS chemicals like PFOA and PFOS, some scientists and state officials believe it is just as risky to human health as the chemical it is designed to replace. PFOA and other PFAS chemicals are linked to some cancers, immune-system problems, high cholesterol, and other illnesses. They have been found in many public and private water systems around the country, including New Jersey...